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## THE MEANING OF בִּתְרוֹן<sup>1</sup>

By WILLIAM R. ARNOLD

Andover Theological Seminary, Cambridge, Mass.

The word בִּתְרוֹן occurs just once in the earliest Hebrew prose narrative which has come down to us, is found nowhere else in the Old Testament, and is entirely unknown to later Hebrew. In II Sam. 2:29, in the story of Abner's retreat to Mahanaim after his disastrous trial of strength with the army of Joab at the pool of Gibeon, we read: ואבנר ואנשיו הלכו בערבה כל הלילה ההוא ויעברו את הירדן וילכו כל הבתרון ויבאו מחנים. The verse is rendered by the Authorized Version, "And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim." The Revised Version substitutes "the Arabah" for "the plain," and "went" for "walked"; otherwise it retains substantially the rendering of the Authorized.

In the assumption that הַבִּתְרוֹן—whether descriptive, appellative, or proper name—stands for some geographical or topographical quantity, some route, locality, or region lying east of Jordan, between the ford which Abner crossed and the city of Mahanaim, the current English versions follow the well-nigh uniform tradition of translators and exegetes, both ancient and modern. When it comes to the more exact definition of the term, however, a considerable degree of uncertainty seems to have existed, nevertheless, from the earliest times.

The texts of the Alexandrian Greek are practically unanimous: καὶ διέβαινον τὸν Ἰορδάνην καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ὅλην τὴν παρατείνουσαν, καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς τὴν παρεμβολήν. There are no variants worth mentioning.<sup>2</sup> Some forty years ago, Wellhausen wrote: "הַבִּתְרוֹן wird auch der LXX vorgelegen haben als בִּיתָן = παρατείνουσα.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted, with corrections and additions, from *Essays in Modern Theology and Related Subjects*, published as a *Testimonial to Charles Augustus Briggs*, New York, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> See Holmes and Parsons, *ad loc.* The reading εἰς παρεμβολὰς Μαδιαμ of the "Lucianic" manuscripts is both conflate and corrupt.

Bei Ortsnamen ist dergleichen am ehesten begreiflich, vgl. Chaifa Kaiphas, Milano Mailand, Mars la Tour Marsch retour u.a.”;<sup>3</sup> that is, the Greek construed the word as a proper name and rendered it by a punning Greek equivalent. That such fantastic phonetic equations were not foreign to the Greek translators, Wellhausen showed sufficiently well at the time.<sup>4</sup> But the requisite assumption of a reading בְּתִרְיֹן is unwarranted; and Wellhausen himself would perhaps be of a different opinion today. *παρτεῖν* occurs in the Greek of the Old Testament some half-dozen times,<sup>5</sup> always with the meaning *to extend, to stretch out, to be outlying* and prevailing in topographical contexts.<sup>6</sup> The Greek, therefore, simply interpreted our passage, *And they crossed the Jordan, and traversed the entire outlying region, and arrived at the camp (Mahanaim)*. We cannot be quite certain whether the translator construed בְּתִרְיֹן as a proper name or as an appellative. But it is clear that no derivative of Hebrew בָּתַר will support his rendering. The interpretation ἡ *παρτείνουσα* is obviously based on Aramaic בָּתַר, *after*, or one of its derivatives, such as בְּתִרְיֹה, or בְּתִרְיֹתָא, *posterior, postremus*; cf. Syriac ܒܬܪܝܬܐ, *posterioritas*.<sup>7</sup> בָּתַר (or בְּאַתַּר) occurs already in Dan. 2:39; 7:6 f., although it had apparently not been coined at the time of the Elephantine papyri. Possibly the translator supposed בְּתִרְיֹן to have been the Aramaic proper name of a trans-Jordanic territory; or he may have adopted his rendering only as a counsel of despair, though understanding the word as a Hebrew appellative. At all events, since the Aramaic בָּתַר is itself compounded of the preposition ב and אַתַּר, *spot, place, track*, to account for the Greek interpretation is to reject it.

Of the later Greek versions, we know only that Aquila rendered הַבְּתִרְיֹן as a proper name, *Βεθωρῶν*.<sup>8</sup> Since the usual Greek

<sup>3</sup> *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis*, p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> *L.c.*, pp. 10 f., note.

<sup>5</sup> See Hatch and Redpath, *Concordance*, p. 1065.

<sup>6</sup> With τὸ παρτεῖν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον the Greek correctly renders הַנִּשְׁקָה עַל פְּנֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן of Num. 23:28, against the current and misleading “that looks down upon” of modern interpreters. Balak took Balaam to the head of a ravine (פְּעֹרִי) that *extended to* (or *looked out upon*) the יַרְשִׁמִּין.

<sup>7</sup> See Payne Smith, *Thesaurus*, ad voc. ܒܬܪܝܬܐ.

<sup>8</sup> Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*, I, p. 550.

spelling of Hebrew בית הורון is *Βαιθωρων* (that is, with a long vowel in the first syllable), it is not likely that Aquila had a different reading from our בתרון, nor have we any reason to suppose that the article was lacking in his manuscript. In construing the word as a proper name, he merely followed the rabbinical exegesis of his day.

It must have been Aquila's *Βεθωρων* that suggested to Jerome the pronunciation *Bethoron* for the word which he, too, understood as a proper name: *et transierunt Jordanem et lustrata omni Bethoron* (some manuscripts and the official Vulgate have *Beth horon*) *venerunt ad castra*; for there is no trace of a Hebrew בית הורון in any text of this passage. Vercellone<sup>9</sup> quotes the opinion of Clericus to the effect that the Vulgate reading *Beth horon* for *Bithron* should be charged to later scribes, and not to Jerome himself. But Jerome's *Onomasticon* contains, under the rubric *Interpretationes secundi libri regum*, the definition "*Bethoron domus irae*,"<sup>10</sup> showing that whether Jerome wrote *Bethoron* or *Beth horon*—more probably the former—he identified the word with the Hebrew proper name בית הורון. Evidently he, too, was more confused than informed upon the subject.

The Peshîṭa seems to have taken the bull by the horns, avoiding the difficulties of translation by means of a bold paraphrase:

וַיַּעֲבְרוּ יִתְיַדְנָה וַאֲזָלוּ כָּל בַּחֲרִין וַאֲחֵרִי לְמַהֲנַיִם

*And they crossed the Jordan, and marched in the direction of Geshur, and reached Mahanaim.*<sup>11</sup> The only light this version sheds upon our problem is that the translator admittedly did not quite understand his Hebrew, and that he manifestly had never heard of such a locality as "the Bithrôn."

Jewish rabbinical tradition has followed the most comfortable course by explaining the הבחירין as a geographical proper name. So the Targum of Jonathan: וַיַּעֲבְרוּ יִתְיַדְנָה וַאֲזָלוּ כָּל בַּחֲרִין וַאֲחֵרִי לְמַהֲנַיִם. Similarly the mediæval commentators,<sup>12</sup> who do not linger upon the subject. Rashi contents himself with two words, שם

<sup>9</sup> *Variae lectiones vulgatae latinae Bibliorum editionis*, II, p. 326.

<sup>10</sup> Lagarde, *Onomastica sacra*<sup>2</sup>, p. 68.

<sup>11</sup> I cite from the London polyglot; the Urāmiah edition has the same text.

<sup>12</sup> See the Rabbinical Bibles.

שֵׁם מַהְרֹז וְגִבּוֹל מֵעֵבֶר David Qimḥi: לִירְדֵן נִקְרָא כֵן עַל עֲנִיִּין יְדוּעַ אֲצִלָּם *name of a town and territory lying beyond the Jordan, and named accordingly, after the familiar meaning of the word* [having reference not to Hebrew but to Aramaic בְּתַר, and understanding the name as designating the country *behind* or *beyond* Jordan].

The single non-topographical explanation of הַבְּתִירוֹן which I have found anywhere is that of the mediæval lexicographer Ibn Parḥon, whose dictionary (A.D. 1160)<sup>13</sup> has this definition: כָּל הַבְּתִירוֹן פ' סוֹךְ הַחֵיל תְּרִגְמוֹ אַחֲרוֹנִים בְּתִרְאִין בֵּין תְּבִין, *The meaning of הַבְּתִירוֹן is the rear guard, בְּתִרְאִין being Aramaic for 'the last' (אַחֲרוֹנִים), that is, of the retreating troops.* Ibn Parḥon obviously construed the word as subject of יִלְכוּ, and, like the Alexandrian Greek version before him and David Qimḥi after him, took it for a derivative of Aramaic בְּתַר. The interpretation is nothing more than a curiosity. But it is interesting to find at least one scholar to whom the construction of כָּל הַבְּתִירוֹן as object of יִלְכוּ was not the most natural one.

Coming to the modern authorities, Gesenius<sup>14</sup> interpreted הַבְּתִירוֹן as an appellative: "*regio montibus vallibusque dissecta, vel vallis montes dissecans*"; rendering, *et peragrata tota valle venerunt Machanaim*. He held that it makes little difference whether the word is construed as a proper name or as an appellative, since even the proper name will have originated from the character of the place, the trans-Jordanic country being exceedingly mountainous.

Recent lexicographers and commentators invariably explain הַבְּתִירוֹן as a geographical term, some construing it as an appellative, but most as a proper name. Gesenius-Buhl: "*N. pr. einer Schlucht an d. Ostseite d. Jordans.*" Brown-Driver-Briggs, more cautiously: "*prob. n. pr. terr. (cleft, ravine) E. of Jordan.*" Siegfried und Stade: "*n. pr., Ort am Jordan.*" König: "*koupirtes Terrain östl. vom Jordan.*" Of commentaries and critical translations, Wellhausen has already been cited. Kittel<sup>15</sup> renders:

<sup>13</sup> *Maḥbereth ha'arāch*, edited by S. G. Stern, Pressburg, 1844, p. 11a.

<sup>14</sup> *Thesaurus*, s.v.

<sup>15</sup> In Kautzsch's *Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*.

“durchschritten die ganze Schlucht und gelangten so nach Mahanaim.” Löhr:<sup>16</sup> “Ein Ort des Namens findet sich sonst nicht; es muss (sie setzen über den Jordan) eine Oertlichkeit *jenseits* des Jordans sein; eine bestimmte *Bergschlucht* welche vom Jordansufer nach *Mahanaim* gerade emporführt.” Henry Preserved Smith:<sup>17</sup> “Abner and his men *marched in the Arabah all that night and crossed the Jordan and went through the whole Bithron* or Ravine, doubtless the proper name of one of the side valleys up which Mahanaim was situated.” Nowack<sup>18</sup> renders: “zog durch die ganze Schlucht, und kam nach Mahanaim,” and remarks, “כל הַבְּתְרוֹן ist fraglich, nur so viel ist klar, es muss eine Oertlichkeit jenseits des Jordans sein, seiner Bedeutung nach wäre es ‘Kluft, Schlucht.’” Finally, Budde:<sup>19</sup> “הַבְּתְרוֹן, nur hier, *die Kluft, Schlucht, Klamm*, muss das Seitenthal sein, an dessen oberem Ende Maḥanajim liegt, also nach unserer Annahme . . . der heutige *W. el-ḥimâr*.” Driver<sup>20</sup> passes over the troublesome passage without comment.

The works on the geography of Palestine naturally conform to the current interpretation of בְּתְרוֹן. George Adam Smith:<sup>21</sup> “Abner, after crossing Jordan, came through the Bithron or Gorge, a name which suits the narrow central portion of the Jordan Valley, to Manhanaim.” It may be observed, incidentally, that Smith fails to follow the narrative; the northward portion of Abner’s journey, which lay through that gorge (הַעֲרִיבָה), had been accomplished before crossing the Jordan—unless we are to maintain that הַעֲרִיבָה and הַבְּתְרוֹן were two mutually exclusive sections of the Ghôr, with Mahanaim situated immediately on the latter’s eastern edge. Buhl<sup>22</sup> is more in accord with recent commentators: “Das 2 Sam. 2:29 genannte *Bitron* (entweder *nom. propr.* od. *appell.*, etwa ‘Kluft’), durch welches Abner auf dem Wege nach *Maḥanaim* hinaufging, kann man wohl am besten mit *W. ‘aḡlun* zusammenstellen; jedenfalls lief später, wie es scheint, ein Römerweg von ‘aḡlun nach *Maḥanaim*.” So also Starck:<sup>23</sup> “Bithron war vermut-

<sup>16</sup> *Die Bücher Samuelis*, p. 130.

<sup>17</sup> *Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, p. 273.

<sup>18</sup> *Handkommentar zum A.T.*, p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> *Kurzer Handkommentar zum A.T.*, p. 207.

<sup>20</sup> *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel*.

<sup>21</sup> *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 586, note 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Geographie des alten Palästina*, p. 121.

<sup>23</sup> *Palästina und Syrien*, s.v.

lich ein Tal jenseits des Jordans." And Kent:<sup>24</sup> "The Bithron, the ravine through which Abner and his men retired to Mahanaim, was probably the Wady Ajlun east of the Jordan."

Now it can be shown that all the interpretations and opinions cited above are fundamentally mistaken. The expression הַבִּתְרוֹן is not a geographical or topographical term, either descriptive, appellative, or proper name. The words כָּל הַבִּתְרוֹן are not the direct object of the preceding וַיֵּלְכוּ, but constitute an adverbial clause indicative of the *time during which* the march continued.

In the first place, כָּל הַבִּתְרוֹן cannot be the direct object of וַיֵּלְכוּ. It is true that an accusative—without preposition—is sometimes used with הֵלֵךְ in the Hebrew of the Old Testament; but such accusative is almost invariably an adverbial modifier, and not the direct object of the verb. That such is the construction in the case of accusatives of time will be readily conceded. So הָלַכְוּ כָּל הַלַּיְלָה, in the verse we are discussing and in the following verse 32. But the construction of הֵלֵךְ in הָלַכְוּ אֲשֶׁר הָלַכְוּ (Gen. 35:3) differs in no respect from that in הָלַכְוּ אֲשֶׁר הָלַכְוּ (Deut. 2:14). A demonstration, perhaps superfluous, is furnished by the text of Jer. 52:7: וַיֵּצְאוּ דֶרֶךְ שָׁעַר בֵּין הַחֲמָתִים וַיֵּלְכוּ דֶרֶךְ הָעֵרֶבָה; as דֶרֶךְ cannot be the direct object of יֵצֵא in the first case, it is not the direct object of הֵלֵךְ in the second; they "go out by" such a road, and they "travel by" such a road. In the same way presumably must we construe such expressions as הֵלֵךְ דֶרֶךְ of Isa. 35:8, יֵלְכוּ אֲרָחוֹת and even הָלַכְוּ נְחִיבוֹת of Judg. 5:6; although, since the accusatives are indeterminate, our case would not be prejudiced by admitting them to be direct objects.

The passages in which הֵלֵךְ must be given the transitive meaning *traverse, march through*, are, as far as I can discover, only two: Deut. 1:19, וַנֵּסֶע מִחֶרֶב וּנֵלֵךְ אֶת כָּל הַמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא וְהָרָא, *and we left Horeb and traversed the whole of this great and terrible wilderness which ye have seen*; Deut. 2:7, יְהוָה יָדַע הוּא לִכְתֹּךְ אֶת הַמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה *Yahwè was cognizant of thy march through this great wilderness*.<sup>25</sup> These two passages are adduced

<sup>24</sup> *Biblical Geography and History*, p. 154.

<sup>25</sup> Driver, in Brown-Driver-Briggs, *s.v.* אֵת, holds that in these passages we have a peculiar use of אֵת rather than a transitive use of הֵלֵךְ; but it is easier to assume the latter than the former in so transparent a context. The case is different in Deut. 9:25

by H. P. Smith in support of the current interpretation of ילכו כל הבחרון of II Sam. 2:29.<sup>26</sup> But a closer study shows that they refute rather than support his conclusion. The accusative is determinate in the one case (המדבר, כל המדבר) as in the other (כל הבחרון). But in the Deuteronomy passages the particle את indicates that we are dealing with a direct object; whereas in the other, כל הבחרון being determinate, the absence of את proves that we are not dealing with a direct object.

But if כל הבחרון is an adverbial accusative and yet determinate, it can have reference only to *time*, and not to space; for while הבחרון as an adverbial accusative, indicative of the route taken, would perhaps be possible,<sup>27</sup> כל הבחרון would be entirely impossible. The expression וילכו כל הבחרון of 2:29 is exactly parallel to וילכו כל הלילה of 2:32 in our author's narrative. In verse 29, Abner and his men travel all the *bithrôn* and arrive at Mahanaim; in verse 32, Joab and his men travel all the night and arrive at Hebron. הבחרון is the name of a certain part of the twenty-four-hour day.

On the question as to what part of the day it designates, etymology and the narrative of the author we are interpreting combine to leave no doubt whatever. After the battle (2:17) between the forces of Abner and those of Joab at the pool of Gibeon (2:13), the Israelites fled before the pursuing Judeans eastward toward the Arabah or Gorge of the Jordan Valley. The course of this flight naturally led through the מדבר גבעון (verse 24), that is, that part of The Wilderness (המדבר, stretching all along the cultivated and inhabited country and separating the latter from the Arabah) which lay parallel with the city of Gibeon.<sup>28</sup> At sunset, the fugitive Israelites reach a site in the מדבר called גבעת אמה, so little known to his readers that the author locates it for them as (accusative of time). On the other hand, ואת בית יהוה אני הלך of Judg. 19:18 is unintelligible and certainly corrupt; see Moore's *Commentary*, pp. 415 f.

<sup>26</sup> *L.c.*, note.

<sup>27</sup> Note, however, that our author says הלכו בערבה, not הלכו הערבה.

<sup>28</sup> מדבר גבעון is not "the pasture land of Gibeon," which, as the commentators in their bewilderment correctly point out, could hardly be the rallying-point for the Israelites at sunset, after their long flight away from the pool of Gibeon; but that part of the common wilderness, המדבר, which lies alongside of Gibeon. So מדבר זיה, מדבר מעון, מדבר הקוע, מדבר ירואל, מדבר ירחי refer to those sections of the great wilderness lying between civilization and the Arabah which faced these several towns respectively. The expression is in all respects analogous to ירדן ירחי, the Jordan at Jericho. And המדבר, *par excellence*, is as much of a proper name as הערבה.



lying opposite גִּיחַ on the road through the מַדְבֵּר גִּבְעֹת (verse 24).<sup>29</sup> There they effect a rally of all their forces, and take their stand upon a single knoll (verse 25), while Abner implores Joab to call a halt to the baneful slaughter (verse 26). Thereupon Joab withdraws his followers from the pursuit, and the two armies march back to their respective headquarters, Abner to Mahanaim, and Joab to Hebron. The author tells exactly how long it took each army to reach home. Leaving גִּבְעַת אֲמָה (east, or perhaps east by north, of Gibeon) at sunset (verse 24), and stopping first on the route of the pursuit to recover his brother's body, then, late at night, at Bethlehem to inter the body in the ancestral tomb (verse 32), Joab continues his march through the night and reaches Hebron at sunrise of the next day (verse 32). On the other side, Abner marches northward through the Arabah, along the west bank of the Jordan, all through the night, crosses the Jordan in the morning, and, marching all the בַּחֲרוֹן, arrives at Mahanaim. It is clear from this narrative that הַבַּחֲרוֹן is less than twelve hours, for there is no mention of sunset or evening of the ensuing day. הַבַּחֲרוֹן is therefore a fraction of the (twelve-hour) day.

If now we turn to the following chapter 4, we may see how much time, in the estimation of this our author, the journey between the Jordan and Mahanaim ordinarily consumed. There the two assassins of Ishbaal travel in the reverse direction. They commit the murder in the palace at Mahanaim *at noon* (כָּהֵם הַיּוֹם), while Ishbaal is enjoying his noon siesta (וְהוּא שָׁכַב אֶת מִשְׁכַּב הַצֹּהֲרַיִם).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> It is not to the point that *to us* גִּיחַ is as little known as גִּבְעַת אֲמָה itself. The author was not writing for us, but for his contemporaries; and defeated troops have often contented themselves with a very insignificant village in sight of which to come to terms with their pursuers. For the rest, it would be hard to find a passage in the Old Testament where learning has done more to make confusion worse confounded. The most nearly correct rendering of II Sam. 2:24 which I can find is that of the English Authorized Version. The Septuagint, Vulgate, and Luther all misconstrue at one or more points; but all come nearer to a correct understanding of the Hebrew than do modern scholars, who, following Wellhausen in one of the moments when he nodded, have continued to wrestle vigorously with difficulties of their own creation. If we but perceive that דָּרַךְ is adverbial accusative and construct to the compound מַדְבֵּר גִּבְעֹת, we have no difficulty whatever with the Masoretic text, which there is no reason to believe the Septuagint's Hebrew differed from materially.—There was a well-known road running through the מַדְבֵּר, where the latter was known as מַדְבֵּר גִּבְעֹת, down to the Arabah, and called דָּרַךְ מַדְבֵּר גִּבְעֹת. Along this road lay the town or village of גִּיחַ, and across the road from it, perhaps some distance back, the height called גִּבְעַת אֲמָה, on one of whose knolls or foot-hills Abner rallied his men for a final stand.

<sup>30</sup> II Sam. 4:5; the authentic text is continued with the word וַיִּכְרוּ of verse 7; verse 6, and verse 7 to מִשְׁכַּב are palpable marginal annotations.

Then, carrying with them the head of Ishbaal, they hasten to David at Hebron, spending the whole night in traveling southward through the Arabah (וילכו דרך הערבה כל הלילה). The character of their burden would admit of no delay. The author does not state at what point of time on the ensuing day they reached Hebron; but it is clear that he wishes us to understand that the time from noon of the first day, when the assassination took place, to evening, when they began their all-night journey through the Ghôr, was spent in traversing the distance between Mahanaim and the Ghôr, where they would presumably cross the Jordan by the same ford that Abner used on his retreat. The time consumed in covering the distance from the Jordan to Mahanaim was therefore; in the opinion of our author, *half a day*.

Judging from the context of the narrative, then, הבחירון is the *half-day*, and, in this particular context, the *forenoon*.

The root of the word בחירון would of itself have led to the same conclusion. For the verb בחר does not mean to *cleave asunder*, as is assumed in the interpretation *cleft, ravine*,<sup>31</sup> *valley*, but very distinctly to *cut into two symmetrical halves*: Gen. 15:10, Abram cuts (יבחר) the various animals *straight through the middle and lays each half (בחר) over against its mate (רעהו)*; Jer. 34:18 f., the calf which they divided into two (כרתו לשנים) and passed between its halves (בחרי) . . . all the people of the land that passed between the halves of the calf (כל עם הארץ העברים בין בחרי העגל). This covers all the occurrences of the root בחר in the Old Testament but one, which will be mentioned below. Etymologically, therefore, הבחירון will be a period of time characterized as the *symmetrical half* of something. But forenoon and afternoon were the only two such periods known to the calendar of the age, which lacked our artificial midnight.<sup>32</sup>

As regards the form קטלון, I need but point out that it is precisely that which we should expect, by analogy, for such a derivative with specialized connotation. Compare חסרון *deficit*, from חסר *lack*; יתרון *surplus, profit*, from יתר *remainder*; היצון

<sup>31</sup> The exact Hebrew for *cleft, ravine*, is פסגה. That הפסגה, whenever it occurs in the Old Testament, is a *ravine* and not a *mountain*, I hope to show in a future paper.

<sup>32</sup> חצי הלילה of Ex. 12:29; Judg. 16:3; Ruth 3:8 is not *midnight* in the technical sense, as is assumed by Ginzel, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen Chronologie*, II, p. 4, but merely the *middle of the night*.

*exterior*, from חוּץ *outside*; תָּכוֹן *interior*, from תָּךְ *inside*; אַחֲרֵי *last*, from אַחֲרֵי *hinder part*; רִאשׁוֹן *first*, from ראש *head*. בַּחֲרוֹן is accordingly essentially an adjectival denominative, derived from בָּתָּר (symmetrical) *half*. With the article it becomes idiomatic for *the half-day*.

As an appellative with this sense בַּחֲרוֹן should be added to our Hebrew lexicography. And II Sam. 2:29 should be rendered: *And Abner and his men marched through the Arabah all that night, then crossed the Jordan, and, marching all the forenoon, arrived at Mahanaim.*

It should be noted, in passing, that the Hebrew has no other means of expressing the idea of *forenoon* or *half-day*. As is correctly emphasized in Brown-Driver-Briggs, בֹּקֶר is never equivalent to our English *morning* in the sense of a period of time.

With this result achieved, some light may perhaps be thrown on the only remaining Old Testament passage that contains the root בַּחֲר, Song of Songs 2:17, which, in spite of some fanciful conjectures, has remained completely enigmatical. הָרֵי בָתָר of this passage is seen to be exactly analogous to הָרֵי נֶשֶׁף of Jer. 13:16. If in the latter case we have *mountains of twilight*, in the former we probably have *mountains of the (completed) half* = *mountains of noon day* = *mountains at noon time*. The lover is besought not to hurry away, but to linger motionless like the hart upon the mountains in the noonday heat.

Finally, if our conclusions have been correct, we have one important datum toward determining the site of Mahanaim. We know for a certainty that it was a half-day's journey from the Jordan. If Joab took about twelve hours to journey from גִּבְעַת אֲמֵה, in the מִדְבָּר facing Gibeon, to Hebron, a distance of some twenty-five to thirty miles, Mahanaim was situated some twelve to fifteen miles on the other side of Jordan, probably in a north-easterly direction from the ford commonly crossed by those journeying thither. The ruins of *Maḥne*, as far as I can judge of their location from Brünnow's map,<sup>33</sup> would comport very well with this conclusion; for, if Abner travelled all night up the Arabah before crossing the Jordan, Mahanaim certainly lay north of the Jabbok.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> In Brünnow and Domascewski, *Die Provincia Arabia*.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Gen. 32:3, 23.